



In the river town of Franklin, Mo., 10-year-old Kit Carson, orphaned and alone, was an apprentice to Dave Workman, a saddler.



Kit, who was to become America's greatest scout and hunter, had come to Missouri from Kentucky, where he was born.



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To Workman's shop came old Dan'l Boone from down-river St. Charles, and plainsmen from up-river Independence. Kit listened to their tales.



Hating indoor work, and lured by the frontier, Kit, now 16, ran away from his master in 1826, carrying his father's flintlock.



At Independence, Mo., Charles Bent needed teamsters to guide his caravan of 28 wagons to Santa Fe. Kit Carson asked for a job.

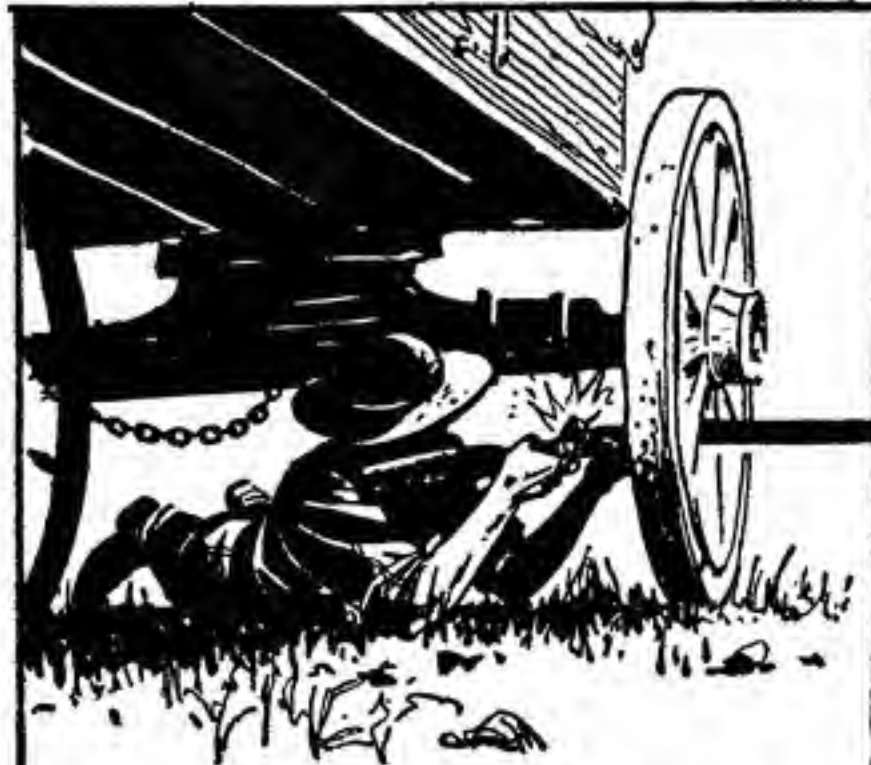


"I can do a man's work—shoot a gun and drive mules," said Kit. "You're hired," said Bent. "I need a teamster, man or boy."



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Kit slept under the stars that night. He was enraptured by the plains, but the hard part of the journey was still ahead.



During his first turn at guard duty, Kit saw something and fired, shouting: "PAWNEES!"



Next morning Charles Bent found Kit had shot one of the mules. The place, Pawnee Rock, Kan., was named for Kit Carson's error.



Even experienced frontiersmen had accidents. A hunter named Broadus wounded himself in the arm, and gangrene threatened.



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The arm was amputated with skinning knife and handsaw, and Broadus survived. Kit realized that life was raw on the Santa Fe trail.



Kit Carson became friendly with Delaware scouts who worked for Wagonmaster Charles Bent. He learned their language.



A party of Cheyenne hunters joined the train and Kit learned to talk Cheyenne.



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When the wagon train reached New Mexico, Kit was a seasoned plainsman. He could make bullets, skin buffalo, and handle mules.



When spring came, Kit Carson took a job as cook for Capt. Ewing Young's caravan returning to Missouri from Taos, N. M.



"I've never cooked much," Kit confessed. "Don't worry about it," said Young. "I won't pay much."



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Kit admitted he was a runaway from indentured apprenticeship. "You'll be arrested if you go back to Missouri," said Young.



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When they met a train headed west, Young found Kit a job and sent him back to New Mexico.



Kit Carson earned a living as interpreter till 1829, when he met Ewing Young again. "Want to learn to set trap, Kit?" he asked.



"I'll be ready to go as soon as I sharpen my skinning knife," said Kit. "Where's your grindstone?"



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But they needed more than sharp knives, for Ewing Young led his band of trappers into the Apache country.